University of Essex

University of Essex Feedback Policy for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Work 2023-24

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Assessment Feedback

Provision of feedback to students on their academic work is a key part of the role of any university teacher, and a vital part of the learning process. Effective feedback helps students to understand the mark that they have received for a particular piece of work (and may thus reduce the number of appeals/complaints), helps them to reflect on their own learning, and helps them to achieve better marks in future pieces of work. The benefits to students of effective feedback are obvious (which is why the NUS has made the improvement of feedback one of its priorities), and there are equally obvious benefits to the University.

1.Types of feedback

There is considerable diversity of practice between (and sometimes within) departments. Some of this diversity is a natural consequence of differences between subject-areas, and it is not suggested that there should be a single, University-wide norm for the type or volume of feedback that should be given to students. Nor is it suggested that there should be a required medium through which feedback is provided; this may well vary depending on the subject, the nature of the assignment and the number of students on the particular module. Subject to individual departmental policies (which may require that feedback is provided in a particular way), those responsible for modules are encouraged to explore the full range of feedback mechanisms available. These range from:

- individual face-to-face verbal feedback

- traditional essay cover-sheet on which markers provide comments

- electronic feedback (as text files, downloadable mp3 files or in some other format)

2. Giving Feedback

It is recommend that departments should ensure that when designing assessment and feedback mechanisms for new modules, and when reviewing the effectiveness of existing arrangements, staff adhere to the following key principles:

- Feedback should be timely. The expectation for the return of assessed work should be 20 working days. Students should be told in advance, in accordance with University policy, when they can expect their marked work to be available for collection. If for any justifiable and unavoidable reason

a department is unable to meet its stated deadline for the provision of feedback, students should be informed of this and advised of the revised arrangements.

- Feedback should relate to clear criteria. The feedback should explain the mark that has been awarded for the piece of work taking into account the learning outcomes for the module and/or the marking scheme, so that students understand the basis for the marks that they have been given.

- Feedback should be constructive. Feedback should help students to achieve higher marks in their future work. To do this effectively, the marker needs to explain what the student did well, what the student did badly (or omitted to do), and how the student might have improved the work to achieve a higher mark.

- Feedback should be clear and legible. It is important that students can understand the feedback that they receive. All feedback should be written in appropriate language and either word-processed or checked to ensure legibility before it is presented to a student.

- Discussion of feedback. Whatever the format of the original feedback, a student who wishes to discuss the feedback they have received should be able to request and receive this within a reasonable time.

Departments may decide to provide feedback earlier than the feedback deadline of 20 working days. The 20 working days does not include Bank Holidays and any of the University's Christmas closure periods (which is usually considered to be six days). Other vacation periods are included in the 20 working days as well as term-time (i.e. coursework handed in at the end of term should be returned at the start of the following term, not 20 working days into it). Working days are Monday to Friday.

3. Timing of the assessment

There needs to be careful consideration to ensure feedback is beneficial to students, for example when feedback is provided at the start of term for coursework submitted at end of the previous term, this is too late to improve work being handed in at the start of that term. Feedback should be used to promote a culture of genuine reflection across modules and connecting ideas.

It is recommended that assessment deadlines are organised within modules so students can receive feedback with sufficient time for them to consider and act upon it in their next similar piece of assessed work in that module.

It was agreed at Senate that from 2007-08, every full year and autumn term module should include an early assessment opportunity to provide feedback before the end of the autumn term on individual student performance to allow any additional support to be targeted at an early stage.

4. Enhancing Feedback

It is recommended that Student Voice Groups (1) include a standing item of business to discuss arrangements for feedback on assessed work, the timeliness of feedback, and the quality of feedback. Annual Review of Courses reports should also continue to address this issue.

(1): Terminology updated to reflect the change from Student Staff Liaison Committees to Student Voice Groups from 2018-9.

5. Exam Feedback

A student who requests access to his/her examination script, or who wishes to know the marks received for individual questions, may apply to the department which is responsible for that module. The department should either:

- permit the student to see his/her examination script in the presence of a relevant member of the academic staff (normally one of the staff responsible for teaching the module);

or

- supply the student with a copy (or a summary) of the examiners' comments on the student's performance in the examination, including marks for individual questions. [Note: The second of these options will normally be appropriate when markers have not written their comments on the examination script itself.] Requests of this type should normally be received within four weeks of the publication of the examination marks

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